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# Samuel Adams: From C.I.A. Analyst to Key Figure in Westmoreland Trial

By M. A. FARBER

On an August morning 20 years ago Samuel A. Adams, a fourth cousin seven times removed of President John Adams, walked around a partition on the sixth floor of Central Intelligence Agency headquarters in the suburbs of Washington and took up a new assignment that moved him from the Congo section of the agency to the Vietnam desk.

Though neither he nor anyone else could have suspected it, that move of a few feet was the beginning of a long and twisting odyssey to Federal District Court in Manhattan, where Mr. Adams is now a defendant in the trial of Gen. William C. Westmoreland's $120 million libel suit against CBS and others.

Without Mr. Adams, it is widely agreed, the 1982 documentary that is the subject of the suit would never — and perhaps could never — have been done. If it was George Crile, a CBS producer, who promoted and constructed the broadcast that alleged a "conspiracy" by General Westmoreland's command in Saigon to minimize enemy strength in 1967, it was Mr. Adams who made the program possible.

It was Mr. Adams — an intelligence analyst, not a spy — who first came to believe that the military had deliberately "faked" data on the size of North Vietnamese and Vietcong forces; who took documents, now used in the trial, from his office and buried them in leaf bags in the Virginia woods; who resigned from the C.I.A. in 1973 and roamed the country looking for former officers who might shed light on the fading events of 1967; who compiled massive "chronologies" handwritten in his tight script; and who, ultimately, provided CBS with his research and led Mr. Crile to most of the people who would appear on "The Uncounted Enemy: A Vietnam Deception."

This week or next, as the lead-off witness for CBS, the 51-year-old Mr. Adams will tell his story to the jury. For months he has sat in his rumpled tweed sportjackets at the edge of the defense table in courtroom 318, taking notes as assiduously as ever, preparing his testimony and passing advice to a battery of CBS lawyers.

What Mr. Adams says from the stand, and the manner in which he says it, may greatly affect CBS's fortunes in this case. Was he a man, as General Westmoreland's lawyers have portrayed him, who was "obsessed" as well as mistaken — a man who was "often in error but seldom in doubt," as George Carver, a former superior in the C.I.A., told the jury. Or was he, as other former C.I.A. associates and Mr. Crile have described him, a "brilliant" analyst who, at fatal cost to his career, refused to compromise his integrity.

No matter which, Mr. Adams's life has been radically changed by his quest, and so has the life of the retired four-star general whom he had never met before this litigation and who now sits, day after day, just in front of him. Of the three individual defendants — including Mr. Crile and Mike Wallace, the narrator of the documentary — only Mr. Adams exchanges more than nods with the plaintiff, who commanded American forces in Vietnam from 1964 to 1968. General Westmoreland asks after Mr. Adams's 21-year-old son, Clayton, who attends court occasionally, and chats about how his own father wanted him to be a lawyer.

"He's a pleasant man, I really tend to like him," Mr. Adams said in an interview last week. "Whatever the hell happened back then in Vietnam, I think he always, from his own point of view, had good motives. He's clearly not Iago in any sense."

The New York Times/Bob Glass

Samuel A. Adams

Of his own actions, Mr. Adams expresses no regrets.

"I think somebody had to do what I did, and it's been a damn interesting experience," he said. "Integrity in intelligence work is a very important thing. A number was done on intelligence in Vietnam, and we're only now recovering from it."

For a man who later became so dogged, Mr. Adams came to the C.I.A. almost serendipitously.

He was born in Bridgeport, Conn., and raised in Connecticut and New

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York. His father, Pierrepont, had a seat on the New York Stock Exchange and, for a time, was a partner of Ellsworth Bunker, who later became an Ambassador to South Vietnam.

Young Sam attended the Buckley School in New York and the St. Mark's School in Massachusetts before entering Harvard College in 1951, where he studied modern European history. After graduation, he enlisted in the Navy for four years and in 1959 — "still not knowing what I wanted" — he entered Harvard Law School.

Mr. Adams quit law school in 1961 — "I didn't have a lawyer's mind" — worked for two years at the Bank of New York, married an Alabama woman from whom he would separate in 1983, and decided, finally, that he wanted a career in Government.

**'I Had Barely Heard of C.I.A.'**

"I had barely heard of the C.I.A.," he recalled. "Back in those days, the C.I.A. was sort of like the National Security Agency today. Nobody inside talked about it." But, in March 1963, Mr. Adams was accepted as an officer trainee at C.I.A. headquarters in Langley, Va., and, after some initiation on "the nuts and bolts of espionage," found himself writing a study on the economy of the Congo Republic, Leopoldville.

"I had read a book about mountain gorillas in the Congo — not quite the same as the guerrillas in Vietnam," he said. "Anyway, in early 1964 a rebellion broke out in the Congo and I was on the ground floor of it. I wrote draft memos that went to the President, including one that accurately predicted who would become Prime Minister.

"The State Department had said no way about that prediction, that it was dumb," Mr. Adams remembered. "But I worked harder than anybody and I had better files."

After "toying" with the idea of switching to "clandestine" operations, Mr. Adams, in August 1965, joined a C.I.A. section concentrating on intelligence regarding Vietnam. "It was just around a partition in the office," he said. "The first day, my boss told me we were going to lose the war."

Mr. Adams, who visited South Vietnam four times in 1966 and 1967, concluded — largely on the basis of captured documents and other material supplied by General Westmoreland's command — that senior military intelligence officers in Saigon were underestimating the strength of the enemy, perhaps by half. And some of Mr. Adams's colleagues shared that view.

But in the fall of 1967 — when the C.I.A. reached an agreement with the military on lower figures that, among other things, excluded a current number for the Vietcong's self-defense forces — Mr. Adams wrote a memorandum calling the accord "ill-formed" and "unwise." After the Tet offensive of January 1968, the C.I.A. — though not the military — adopted figures of the magnitude originally advocated by Mr. Adams. But by then, Mr. Adams had resigned in protest from the Vietnamese Affairs staff.

From early 1968 to 1973 Mr. Adams worked in the agency's Office of Economic Research, eventually concentrating on Cambodia. But he never lost interest in why the military had acted as it had in 1967 and, in 1969, he removed related documents from the C.I.A. and hid them in bags and empty Spanish wine cartons in a field near his 250-acre cattle farm in Virginia.

By 1972 Mr. Adams was asking the C.I.A. and the Army to conduct investigations into the events of 1967, "including the possibility that General Westmoreland may have been ultimately responsible for the fabrication" of enemy strength figures.

In April 1973, Mr. Adams voluntarily testified at the "Pentagon Papers" trial of Daniel Ellsberg in Los Angeles, and made public his accusations against the military. The following month — feeling, he said, that he was being pressured out of the C.I.A. — he resigned from the agency.

In 1975, Mr. Adams detailed his views about the events in Vietnam in 1967 in an article in Harper's magazine, for which Mr. Crile, who had yet to join CBS, was the editor. Mr. Adams also testified before the House Select Committee on Intelligence, which drew conclusions much like his own.

Mr. Adams then signed a $40,000 contract with W. W. Norton to write a book on the subject — still unpublished — and intensified his research. In late 1980, after Mr. Crile approached him about a documentary, Mr. Adams became a consultant for the network for a year, receiving $25,000, plus expenses. Mr. Crile would later write Mr. Wallace that "Adams was the thread, he delivers the indictment to us."

Since September 1982, when General Westmoreland filed suit, Mr. Adams has again been a consultant to CBS, at $200 a day plus expenses. And since last October, he has spent most of those days in court.

For Mr. Adams, a robust 6-footer who calls himself "a country boy," life in court has been "debilitating physically — the worst thing for me." But when it's all over, he said, he plans to reapply to the "C.I.A. I love."

He smiled. "I'll be sort of interested to see what they do."